

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep Harry Mitchell, Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, today said that protecting and maintaining TRICARE for veterans was critical to his decision to support the health care reform package being considered by the House of Representatives today.

"Our nation's veterans have defended this country and our freedom with honor and valor and earned the health care benefits TRICARE provides for them and their families," Mitchell said. "I have worked closely with veterans and Veteran Service Organizations since taking office to ensure that our nation lives up to its responsibility to serve those who bravely served us. I was proud to introduce the new G.I. Bill in the House of Representatives, to work for an expanded veteran's suicide prevention outreach program and now to ensure that TRICARE is protected and preserved as health reform moves forward."

While the Senate version of the health reform legislation does not specifically mention TRICARE, the coverage provided by TRICARE satisfies the requirements in the bill. To affirm this is the case, the House yesterday unanimously passed H.R. 4887 the TRICARE Affirmation Act, which provides assurances that care provided to those in the military and their families, as well as military retirees under the age of 65 and their families would meet the requirement for coverage. [Source: [U.S. House of Representatives Committees on Armed Services, Veterans Affairs, Ways and Means, Education and Labor, and Energy and Commerce](#)

]

Mitchell has been a leading advocate in Congress to ensure veterans health care needs are met, including working to ensure advance funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), new Agent Orange presumptions for three additional diseases, new Gulf War Illness presumptions for nine additional diseases, and an increase in resources for health care in the 2010 budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs.